Use of grainland for non-form purpose

478. SHRI JAGMOHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) how much grainland has been lost to non—farm uses during the period 1982-1992;

(b) how much grainland has been converted into high value speciality crops; and

(c) what measures are being taken to ensure that the area of grainland per person is not reduced and the poor are not subjected to further deprivation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) There is only marginal decline of 0.8 million hectares in the total cultivable area which declined from 185.2 million hectares in 1981-82 to 184.4 million hectares in 1991-92.

(b) The area under foodgrains declined from 129.7 million hectares in 1981-82 to 128.0 million hectares in 1990.91, as per Land Use Statistics, showing a decline of about 1.7 million hectares during this period. During the same period, there is an increase of around 1.38 million hectares of areas under high value crops of fruits and vegetables which increased from 5.08 million hectares to 6.46 million hectares.

(c) The land being fixed, the per capita grain land is likely to be reduced over the years with the increase in population. However, the programmes are being implemented to increase the cultivated area through reclamation of culturable wasteland and reducing the fallow land by extending the irrigation facilities. Further, various crop production oriented programmes are being implemented to increase the productivity per unit of area to maximise the return from the available land resources.

Butter Oil

479. SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH MANN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have allowed the import of butter oil by National Dairy Development Board at concessional import duty;

(b) the rates at which the butter oil will be imported and the concession allowed on such import;

(c) whether butter oil and power milk is at the same time allowed to be exported so as to facilitate Indian dairy farmers to compete in the international market; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The rate of import of butter oil depends upon the quantity available and the international prices prevailing at the time of import. The rate at present ranges from US$ 1600 to 1770 per MT. The concession granted by the Goverment to the National Dairy Development Board for import is reduction in custom duty from 40 per cent to 20 per cent.

(c) and (d) There is no question of exporting butter oil as the same is not manufactured in India. However, milk powder is permitted for export through APEDA.

Desertification of Land

480. SHRI RAJNI RANJAN SAHU: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether 40 per cent of land in the country suffers from desertification:

(b) what is the percentage of land that has been treated so far by various measures; and

(c) what other measures Government proppse to take to check desertification?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) No, Sir. An area of 362 lakh ha. accounting to about 11% of the total geographical area suffers from desertification.

(b) So far, an area of 446 lakh ha. which is 1.23% of the total affected area has been treated under various programmes. They include, the core activities, such as land resources development, water resources development, and afforestation and pasture development.

(c) In addition to above, integrated land use development, integrated development programmes, developing drought preparedness and developing comprehensive anti-desertification programmes are proposed to check desertification in the country.

Low Yield of Indian Sheep

481. SHRI RAJENDRA PRASAD MODY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that on an average an Australian sheep yields five kgs. of wool annually, while the corresponding figure for India is barely 700 grams; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government for increasing the production of wool and improving its quality particularly in Rajasthan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) Yes Sir, but with the difference that the corresponding figure for India is about 900 grams.

(b) The Government has taken up several steps for sheep/wool development programmes in the country including the State of Rajasthan with the basic objective of increasing quality and quantity of wool as well as the body weight of the animals. The Government has taken up the following programmes:

1. Central Sheep Breeding Farm, Hissar for the production and supply of superior exotic Rams to the States.

2. The National Ram|Buck Prdouction Programme and programme for Rabbit Development. This is a Centrally Sponsored Programme under which State Departments of Animal Husbandry are provided funds.

3. The Agriculture Development Project (Including Sheep Development) with World Bank assistance is under implementation in Rajasthan State.

Agricultural Labourers in the Country

482. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Agricultural labourers in the country with State-wise details;

(b) the amount of wages they earn with details;

(c) the reasons for a large number of agricultural labourers in the State of Bihar;

(d) whether there is any scheme to provide better employment opportunities to the labourers in Bihar; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) and (b) A Statement showing the Agricultural Labourers and Daily Wage Rates of Unskilled Agricultural Labour is annexed. (See below).

(c) The prevalence of high poverty level coupled with lack of occupational